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Evaluation

The evaluation policy of UNDP

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I. Introduction

1. The present document presents the revised policy of UNDP for evaluation, as approved in 2011. The purpose of the policy is to establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function. The policy seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for organizational learning and effective management for results, and to support accountability. The policy also applies to UNDP and its associated funds and programmes — the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. The policy will be subject to periodic independent review.

2. The policy responds to resolution 59/250 of 2004, in which the General Assembly required the systematic evaluation of United Nations system operational activities by assessing their impact on poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development of programme countries. It further mandates the United Nations system to promote national ownership and capacity development and to make system-wide progress in collaboration in evaluation. The policy draws from and is aligned with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system approved by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) in April 2005.

3. UNDP subscribes to the overarching United Nations goal of reducing extreme poverty and hunger by half by 2015. It supports the efforts of partner countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development results primarily through its role as a global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build better lives. While emphasizing national ownership and capacity development, UNDP helps countries develop and share solutions to challenges in key strategic development areas. As resident coordinator of United Nations operational activities at the country level, UNDP promotes effective coordination of United Nations system support to national priorities.

4. Evaluation in UNDP provides an objective assessment of contributions to development results, through assessing its programmes and operations, including advocacy, advisory services, knowledge management, technical assistance, coordination and partnerships. Evaluation addresses what works and why, as well as what does not work, and unintended outcomes. This will support accountability, inform decision-making and allow UNDP to better manage for development results.

5. Evaluation will improve learning and knowledge for development among UNDP and its partners. Engagement of all key stakeholders will enhance capacity for evaluation as well as its utility. The strengthening of knowledge-management systems, learning groups and communities of practice will increase access to knowledge and enhance knowledge-sharing, collaboration and innovation.

6. The present policy note establishes the guiding principles and norms; explains key evaluation concepts; outlines the main organizational roles and responsibilities; defines the types of evaluation covered; and identifies the key elements of a system for learning and knowledge management. It also outlines the capacity and resource requirements to enhance excellence in the development of an evaluation culture and a learning organization.

II. Guiding principles

7. The following are the key principles:

(a) **Human development and human rights.** Evaluation is guided by the people-centred approach of UNDP to development, which enhances capabilities, choices and rights for all men and women. Evaluation abides by universally shared values of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity.

(b) **United Nations system coordination and global partnership.** Evaluation draws on and contributes to collaboration within the United Nations system to improve effectiveness and reduce transaction costs for development cooperation. UNDP advocates strengthened professional collaboration under the aegis of UNEG and country-level coordination in evaluation under the Resident Coordinator system. With the increasing engagement of UNDP in global initiatives and partnership programmes with other donors, non-governmental organizations and civil society, the conduct of joint evaluations enhances global partnership.

(c) **National ownership.** Evaluation should be guided by national priorities and concerns and should be conducted in alignment with national systems. It should be inclusive and take into account diverse national interests and values. Evaluation should strengthen partnerships with governments and key stakeholders. It should build the capacity of national institutions to implement, monitor and evaluate.

(d) **Managing for results.** Evaluation supports UNDP to manage for results by assessing the extent to which UNDP processes, products and services contribute effectively to development results affecting people's lives. Through this, evaluation highlights the need for quality in the design of programmes so that results are clear, measurable and can be monitored and evaluated. Through the generation of evidence, evaluation enables more informed management and decision-making for strategic planning and programming.

III. Norms

8. UNDP evaluations operate under norms based on the UNEG norms for evaluation in the United Nations system, as follows:

(a) **Independence.** The evaluation function should be structurally independent from the operational management and decision-making functions in the organization so that it is free from undue influence, more objective, and has full authority to submit reports directly to appropriate levels of decision-making. Management must not impose restrictions on the scope, content, comments and recommendations of evaluation reports. To avoid conflict of interest, evaluators must not be directly involved in policy-setting, design, implementation or management of the subject of the evaluation either before, during or after the evaluation.

(b) **Intentionality.** The rationale for an evaluation and the decisions to be based on it should be clear from the outset. The scope, design and plan of the evaluation should generate relevant, timely products that meet the needs of intended users.

(c) **Transparency.** Meaningful consultation with stakeholders is essential for the credibility and utility of the evaluation. Full information on evaluation design and methodology should be shared throughout the process to build confidence in the findings and understanding of their limitations in decision-making.

(d) **Ethics.** Evaluation should not reflect personal or sectoral interests. Evaluators must have professional integrity and respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and to verify statements attributed to them. Evaluations must be sensitive to the beliefs and customs of local social and cultural environments and must be conducted legally and with due regard to the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its findings. In line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender inequality.

(e) **Impartiality.** Removing bias and maximizing objectivity are critical for the credibility of the evaluation and its contribution to knowledge. Prerequisites for impartiality are: independence from management; objective design; valid measurement and analysis; and the rigorous use of appropriate benchmarks agreed upon beforehand by key stakeholders. In addition to being impartial, evaluation teams should include relevant expertise and be balanced in their gender and regional composition.

(f) **Quality.** All evaluations should meet minimum quality standards defined by the Evaluation Office. The key questions and areas for investigation should be clear, coherent and realistic. The plan for evaluation should be practical and cost effective. To ensure that the information generated is accurate and reliable, evaluation design, data collection and analysis should reflect professional standards, with due regard for any special circumstances or limitations reflecting the context of the evaluation. To ensure this, the professionalism of evaluators and their intellectual integrity in applying standard evaluation methods is critical. Evaluation findings and recommendations should be presented in a manner that will be readily understood by target audiences.

(g) **Timeliness.** Evaluations must be designed and completed in a timely fashion so as to address the specific purpose and objectives for which they were commissioned and ensure the usefulness of the findings and recommendations. Balancing technical and time requirements with practical realities while providing valid, reliable information is central to ensuring that the evaluation function supports management for results.

(h) **Utility.** Evaluation is a management discipline that seeks to provide information to be used for evidence-based decision-making. To enhance the usefulness of the findings and recommendations, key stakeholders should be engaged in various ways in the conduct of the evaluation. The scope, design and plan of the evaluation should generate relevant, timely products that meet the needs of intended users. The interpretation of findings should be grounded in the realities of the country and programme context, and the recommendations made should be practical and realistic.

IV. Key concepts

9. **Evaluation.** Evaluation is judgement made of the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of development efforts, based on agreed criteria and benchmarks among key partners and stakeholders. It involves a rigorous, systematic and objective process in the design, analysis and interpretation of information to answer specific questions. It provides assessments of what works and why, highlights intended and unintended results, and provides strategic lessons to guide decision-makers and inform stakeholders.

10. **Monitoring and review.** Monitoring and review are distinct from evaluation. Monitoring is a continuous function providing managers and key stakeholders with regular feedback on the consistency or discrepancy between planned and actual activities and programme performance and on the internal and external factors affecting results. Monitoring provides an early indication of the likelihood that expected results will be attained. It provides an opportunity to validate the programme theory and logic and to make necessary changes in programme activities and approaches. Information from systematic monitoring serves as a critical input to evaluation. Reviews are closely associated with monitoring and are periodic, often light assessments of the performance of an initiative and do not apply the due process or methodological rigour of evaluation.

11. **Audit is distinct from evaluation.** Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. It assesses and contributes to the improvement of governance, risk management and control processes in responding to risks regarding the reliability and integrity of financial and operational information; effectiveness and efficiency of operations; safeguarding of assets; and compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures.

Definition

12. **Development results are:**

(a) **Output:** Tangible product (including services) of an intervention that is directly attributable to the initiative. Outputs relate to the completion (rather than the conduct) of activities and are the type of results over which managers have most influence. An example of an output for a project for judicial reform is the number of judges trained and qualified.

(b) **Outcome:** Actual or intended changes in development conditions that an intervention(s) seeks to support. The contribution of several partners is usually required to achieve an outcome. When the same example is applied, an outcome is the improvement in the judicial process as evidenced by a reduction in the backlog of cases.

(c) **Impact:** Actual or intended changes in human development as measured by people's well-being. In this example, an impact is demonstrated by the fact that more people have access to justice and are better able to exercise their rights.

13. **Attribution:** The precise causal link to changes in development results flowing from an individual intervention. For example, the number of judges trained could be directly attributed to a specific intervention.

14. **Contribution:** The changes in development results that can be credibly linked to an intervention. Contribution implies a logical cause-and-effect relationship that points to the meaningful input of an intervention to the development result(s). For instance, improvement in the judicial process could result from the interventions of several actors working to train judges, improve administrative processes or bring about changes in legislative policy.

15. **Organizational effectiveness:** This refers to more direct, accountable and attributable measures of performance over which the organization has relatively more control or manageable interests.

16. **Development effectiveness:** This is the extent to which the intended development goals of a country are achieved through the agency of the government, civil society and development partners. Evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the partners' contribution in enhancing the factors and conditions that enable countries to achieve their development goals.

V. Roles and responsibilities

17. All constituents of UNDP, including the Executive Board, have key and distinct roles and responsibilities in ensuring that evaluation supports learning and accountability. Working together, they contribute to a coherent and effective evaluation system. The evaluations conducted by UNDP fall into two categories: independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office, and decentralized evaluations commissioned by programme units and conducted by independent external experts. Roles and responsibilities for each of these categories and for national evaluation capacity development are described below.

18. **The Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA** is the custodian of the evaluation policy. The Executive Board:

(a) Approves the evaluation policy and considers the annual reports on its implementation;

(b) Ensures the independence of the evaluation function by:

(i) Approving annually the costed programme of work for the Evaluation Office;

(ii) Reviewing and advising on the appointment, renewal and dismissal of the Director of the Evaluation Office.

(c) Requires management response and follow-up to all evaluations by UNDP;

(d) Uses and draws on the findings and recommendations of evaluations for oversight and approval of corporate policy, strategy and programmes;

(e) Reviews and approves the management responses to independent evaluations;

(f) Requests periodically the Evaluation Office to commission an independent review of the evaluation policy.

A. Independent evaluations

19. **The Evaluation Office of UNDP** is the custodian of the evaluation function under the following aspects of evaluation. The Evaluation Office:

(a) *Governance and accountability*

(i) Prepares and periodically reviews and updates UNDP policy for evaluation;

(ii) Submits annually its costed programme of work to the Executive Board;

(iii) Reports annually to the Executive Board on the function, compliance, coverage, quality, findings and follow-up to evaluations conducted by UNDP and its associated funds and programmes;

(iv) Maintains a system to make all evaluation reports, management response and the status of follow-up actions publicly accessible;

(v) Regularly alerts senior management to emerging evaluation-related issues of corporate significance, without taking part in decision-making.

(b) *Conduct of evaluations*

(i) Promotes national ownership and leadership of, and capacity development in evaluation through country-led and joint evaluations, while ensuring the independence, quality and utility of evaluation;

(ii) Develops annually the programme of work for independent evaluations, based on consultations with the Executive Board, senior management, the associated funds and programmes and other stakeholders, and in response to emerging issues that the Evaluation Office may identify;

(iii) Conducts thematic evaluations, programme evaluations such as the Assessment of Development Results (ADRs) at the country level, evaluations of global, regional, and South-South programmes, and other evaluations as required;

(iv) Ensures that independent evaluations provide strategic and representative coverage of UNDP programmes and results and are completed in a timely manner to feed into decision-making;

(v) Conducts independent evaluations in line with best international evaluation standards, including the UNEG norms and standards, Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines, and contributes to innovation in evaluation methodology and dissemination of good practices.

(c) *Partnership and knowledge management*

(i) Maintains a publicly accessible repository of evaluations;

(ii) Distils evaluation findings and lessons for dissemination in appropriate formats for targeted audiences;

(iii) Supports the development of learning groups and communities of practice in evaluation by establishing and supporting knowledge networks;

(iv) Engages in partnership with professional evaluation networks, including UNEG, the Development Assistance Committee Network on Evaluation, the

Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks, and regional organizations to enhance quality and credibility.

(d) *United Nations reform*

(i) Ensures that evaluation in UNDP contributes to and remains consistent with United Nations policy and reforms;

(ii) Supports the harmonization of the evaluation function in the United Nations system;

(iii) Prioritizes joint evaluations with United Nations agencies;

(iv) Contributes evaluative evidence to system-wide evaluations;

(v) Contributes to the annual work programme of UNEG.

(e) *Management*

The Director of the Evaluation Office is accountable for:

(i) Managing the Evaluation Office budget, including contributions from partners;

(ii) Managing the recruitment of the Evaluation Office staff, in line with UNDP recruitment procedures and UNEG competencies for evaluators, taking the final decision on selection of staff.

20. **The Administrator of UNDP** is accountable for UNDP results, and:

(a) Safeguards the integrity of the evaluation function and its independence from operational management;

(b) Appoints, renews, and/or dismisses the Director of the Evaluation Office, in consultation with the Executive Board, in line with UNEG standards, and limits the term of appointment to four years, renewable once, and bars re-entry into the organization;

(c) Submits an annual report on the performance of the Director of the Evaluation Office to the Bureau of the Executive Board;

(d) Safeguards the independence of the Evaluation Office by ensuring that the Director has the final say on the contents of all evaluation reports issued by the Evaluation Office;

(e) Provides sufficient resources and capacity for evaluation in the organization, including resources for the Evaluation Office and independent evaluations such as global, regional and country programmes and thematic evaluations;

(f) Ensures that UNDP prepares a management response to independent evaluations that are submitted to the Executive Board;

(g) Ensures that senior management responds to and utilizes evaluation in their operational, strategic, policy and oversight functions and that appropriate follow-up to the findings and recommendations of independent evaluation is taken by the relevant units.

21. **The senior management of practice and policy bureaux, regional bureaux, and country offices**:

(a) Ensures the evaluability of programmes by identifying clear results, developing measurable indicators, and establishing performance targets and baseline information;

(b) Ensures the effective monitoring and decentralized evaluation of implementation and performance of programmes to generate relevant, timely information for the conduct of independent evaluations;

(c) Makes all requested and relevant information available to the independent evaluation team;

(d) Draws on evaluation findings to improve the quality of programmes, guide strategic decision-making on future programming and positioning, and share knowledge on development experience;

(e) Promotes organizational learning through analysis and application of evaluation findings across regions, themes and results areas, including through knowledge systems and products.

B. Decentralized evaluations

22. The **Administrator of UNDP** is accountable for UNDP results, and:

(a) Ensures compliance with the evaluation policy as integral to effective accountability across the organization;

(b) Provides sufficient resources and capacity for decentralized evaluations;

(c) Approves any revisions to evaluation plans attached to regional, global and thematic programmes;

(d) Ensures that UNDP prepares a management response to decentralized evaluations;

(e) Ensures that senior management responds to and utilizes decentralized evaluation in their operational, strategic, policy and oversight functions and that appropriate follow-up action to the findings and recommendations of decentralized evaluations is taken by the relevant units.

23. **The senior management of practice and policy bureaux, regional bureaux and country offices that manage global, regional, country and thematic programmes**:

(a) Ensures the evaluability of programmes by identifying clear results, developing measurable indicators, and establishing performance targets and baseline information;

(b) In collaboration with stakeholders and partners, ensures the effective monitoring of implementation and performance of programmes to generate relevant, timely information for management for results and evaluation;

(c) With partner governments and key stakeholders, develops a costed evaluation plan attached to programme documents. In the case of country offices, budgets the plan no later than at the time of adoption of the country programme

action plan. Periodically reviews and updates the plan to ensure its relevance to national priorities;

(d) Establishes an appropriate institutional arrangement to manage evaluation;

(e) Ensures adequate resources for evaluation;

(f) Safeguards the independence of the evaluation process and product;

(g) Ensures the implementation of the evaluation plan in line with established quality standards, including the UNEG Norms and Standards, Code of Conduct, Ethical Guidelines and UNDP evaluation guidance;

(h) Advocates country-led and joint evaluations to promote national ownership and leadership of evaluation while ensuring the independence, quality and utility of evaluation;

(i) Makes all necessary information available to the evaluation team;

(j) Promotes joint evaluation work with the United Nations system and other partners, while ensuring accountability for the specific contributions of UNDP to development results. In the case of country offices, it contributes to the UNDAF evaluation;

(k) Prepares, in consultation with national partners, management responses to all evaluations, and ensures and tracks appropriate, timely implementation of the agreed evaluation recommendations;

(l) Draws on evaluation findings to improve the quality of programmes, guide strategic decision-making on future programming and positioning, and share knowledge on development experience;

(m) Ensures the transparency of and public access to all evaluation reports;

(n) Promotes organizational learning through analysis and application of evaluation findings across regions, themes and results areas, including through knowledge systems and products.

24. In their exercise of line oversight and support to evaluations commissioned by country offices, the **Directors of regional bureaux**:

(a) Ensure evaluability of country programmes, quality of evaluation plans and evaluation practices by country offices and the full implementation of costed evaluation plans;

(b) Support and guide country office capacity in evaluation, including establishing regional expertise and regional evaluation support systems;

(c) Review and clear revisions of evaluation plans attached to country programmes;

(d) Ensure effective use of evaluations for oversight.

25. **The Evaluation Office**:

(a) Sets evaluation standards for planning, conducting and using decentralized evaluations, and assesses the quality of evaluation reports;

(b) Disseminates methodology and good practice standards for evaluation management in UNDP;

(c) Provides a roster of evaluation experts;

(d) Supports a network of evaluation practitioners;

(e) Maintains a public depository of evaluation resources to facilitate sharing of evaluative knowledge.

Mandatory decentralized evaluations

26. UNDP ensures that planned evaluations assess its contribution to development results at the outcome level. These evaluations should together provide sufficient coverage of programmatic activities, address all outcomes in the programme document, and produce evaluative evidence to inform decision-making and support accountability and learning.

27. Mandatory decentralized evaluations are the evaluations that have been identified in the evaluation plan annexed to the global, regional, country and thematic and South-South programmes. A comprehensive and strategic evaluation plan should include an appropriate mix of outcome-level, project and thematic evaluations, including joint evaluations. Evaluations when required by a cost-sharing agreement or partnership protocol (e.g., Global Environment Facility) are mandatory, and should be included in the evaluation plan.

28. Evaluation plans are reviewed as part of the annual programme review process to ensure relevance of the planned evaluations. With the advance clearance by the regional bureau, the evaluation plans for country offices can be revised, with government agreement, for compelling reasons such as major changes in policy, programme or evaluation context. The Administrator approves any changes in the regional, global, thematic and South-South programme evaluation plans.

C. National evaluation capacity development

29. UNDP programme units promote and coordinate South-South and trilateral cooperation in support of capacity-building for evaluation at the country level by strengthening communities of practice in evaluation and maintaining regional rosters of evaluation experts and institutes in each region.

30. At the request of programme host Governments, UNDP provides support to national evaluation capacity development.

31. In collaboration with UNEG, the Evaluation Office supports national evaluation capacity development and provides a forum for discussion of evaluation issues confronting countries and enables participants to draw on recent and innovative experiences of other countries and facilitates the preparation of the ground for formulation of longer-term initiatives to strengthen national capacities for public policy evaluation through South-South and trilateral cooperation.

VI. United Nations Capital Development Fund and United Nations Volunteers programme

52. **Evaluation units of the associated funds and programmes** are the custodians of the evaluation function in their organizations, and for their fund or programme, respectively, they:

(a) Periodically review and revise, as necessary, the evaluation policy;

(b) Contribute to the development by the Evaluation Office of common evaluation quality standards and guidelines;

(c) Support the elaboration of well-defined results frameworks to facilitate the evaluation of programmes and activities;

(d) Submit to their senior management a biennial plan and budget for the evaluation unit;

(e) Develop, in consultation with key stakeholders, an annual agenda of evaluations to be conducted;

(f) Manage and conduct evaluations;

(g) Ensure, whenever possible, joint evaluation work with the United Nations system and other partners;

(h) Quality assure mandatory evaluations outsourced or managed by programme staff;

(i) Ensure the maintenance of a publicly accessible repository of evaluations;

(j) Ensure the dissemination of evaluation findings and lessons in appropriate formats for targeted audiences, and promote their consideration in decision-making and for learning;

(k) Track management response and follow-up to agreed evaluation recommendations;

(l) Alert their senior management to evaluation-related issues of corporate significance;

(m) Provide input to the annual report on evaluation to the Executive Board;

(n) Contribute to developing evaluation capacity;

(o) Ensure consistency with United Nations policy and reforms, and contribute to improving evaluation collaboration, quality and usefulness, including through participation in UNEG.

53. Mandatory evaluation criteria for UNCDF are:

(a) At least one strategic or thematic assessment per year in response to corporate priorities;

(b) Mid-term or final evaluations of selected projects in critical areas of relevance to the two UNCDF practice areas of local development and inclusive finance;

(c) Project evaluations when required by a partnership protocol;

(d) Participation in evaluations of joint programmes as required by approved joint programme documents.

34. **Mandatory evaluations for UNV** are:

(a) One strategic or thematic assessment per year in response to demands identified during a corporate consultative process;

(b) Mid-term or final evaluations of selected projects and initiatives financed from the Special Voluntary Fund, in critical areas and/or areas where there is a need to learn about the contribution of volunteerism to peace and development;

(c) Project evaluations when required by a partnership protocol;

(d) Participation in evaluations of joint programmes when required by the programme design.

VII. Use of evaluation findings and recommendations

35. All evaluations will have a management response that should be systematically implemented by UNDP. The Evaluation Office maintains a system to track management responses to evaluations. The status of follow-up actions should be updated by management in the tracking system. The Evaluation Office periodically briefs those with oversight function on the status of follow-up to evaluation recommendations and implementation of management responses, and alerts senior management to any areas of concern.

36. All UNDP evaluation reports are made public. The Director of the Evaluation Office is responsible for authorizing the dissemination of independent evaluation reports and related material. Resident representatives, regional bureau directors, and directors of practice and policy bureaux are required to disclose all evaluations commissioned by their respective units.

37. To facilitate wider use and dissemination of evaluation findings, the executive summary of all independent evaluations are translated into the three working languages of UNDP. The Evaluation Office is responsible for a communication and outreach programme to expand the effective use of independent evaluation findings and the development of a learning community. Country offices are encouraged to translate a summary of evaluations into local languages and use other means in order to inform stakeholders of findings and for learning.

38. As a learning and knowledge-based organization, UNDP ensures that constituents of the organization draw lessons from evaluations and internalize evaluative knowledge in programming and knowledge-sharing efforts. Lessons from evaluation should not be limited to the immediate subject matter of evaluation and should be shared across countries, regions and focus areas in which UNDP works. Knowledge generated from UNDP evaluation should be useful to national and international partners in development and contribute to global policy debate and innovation in development.

Annex I

Types of evaluation

Independent evaluations

Thematic evaluations assess UNDP performance in areas that are critical to ensuring sustained contributions to development results in the context of emerging development issues and changing priorities at the global and regional levels. Thematic evaluations may cover, for example, UNDP policies, focus and results areas, partnerships, programmatic approaches, cooperation modalities, or business models.

Global, regional and South-South programme evaluations assess the performance and intended and achieved results of those programmes. They are intended to reinforce the substantive accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board, and will be timed to contribute to the preparation and approval of the next programme.

Assessments of Development Results (ADRs) assess the attainment of intended and achieved results as well as UNDP contributions to development results at the country level. Their scope includes, but is not necessarily confined to, UNDP responsiveness and alignment to country challenges and priorities; strategic positioning; use of comparative advantage; and engagement with partners. The number and selection of countries, and the timing of these evaluations, will be determined to ensure coverage and to allow findings and recommendations to feed into the preparation of the subsequent programme. Wherever possible, these evaluations will be conducted jointly or at a minimum, in coordination with other United Nations organizations.

Decentralized evaluations

UNDAF evaluations focus on UNDAF outcomes, their contributions to national priorities and the coherence of United Nations Country Team support. The UNDAF evaluation is timed to provide inputs to the preparation of the next UNDAF, country programmes and projects by individual agencies. The UNDAF evaluations take place at the beginning of the penultimate year of the programme cycle and build on UNDAF annual reviews, as well as major studies and evaluations that have been completed by individual agencies.

Global, regional and country programme evaluations assess UNDP attainment of intended results and contributions to development results and outcomes as outlined in the respective programmes. The evaluation examines key issues such as UNDP effectiveness in delivering and influencing the achievement of development results and UNDP strategic positioning.

Outcome evaluations address the short-term, medium-term and long-term results of a programme or cluster of related UNDP projects. They include an assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and relevance of the programme against their own objectives, their combined contribution, and the contribution of external factors and actors. Outcome evaluations also examine unintended effects of the programme or projects. Rather than being ad hoc, the selection of the programme or project cluster to be evaluated should be guided by

strategic decisions made by the programme unit, in line with the evaluation plan. This decision should be informed by agreements with national government and key stakeholders and partnership requirements, with attention to utility and linkage with strategic and programmatic evaluations.

Thematic evaluations assess UNDP performance in areas that are critical to ensuring a sustained contribution to development results in the context of emerging development issues and changing priorities in a given context that is pertinent to a UNDP programme unit. Thematic evaluations may cover, for example, UNDP results and focus areas, cross-cutting issues such as gender and capacity development, partnerships, programmatic approaches, cooperation modalities, or business models.

Project evaluations assess the efficiency and effectiveness of a project in achieving its intended results. They also assess the relevance and sustainability of outputs as contributions to medium-term and longer-term outcomes. Projects can be evaluated during the time of implementation, at the end of implementation (terminal evaluation), or after a period of time after the project has ended (post-evaluation). Project evaluation can be invaluable for managing for results, and serves to reinforce the accountability of project managers. Additionally, project evaluation provides a basis for the evaluation of outcomes and programmes, as well as for strategic and programmatic evaluations and ADRs, and for distilling lessons from experience for learning and sharing knowledge.

Evaluations in UNV and UNCDF

Strategic and thematic evaluations provide a basis for developing forward-looking strategies for organizational effectiveness and core thematic programme areas. They involve reviews of past experience to identify strengths and gaps in the approach and results relating to a particular aspect of the organization and its approach, or to a thematic programme area. They may also include a review of the global trends and partner practices in the organizational or thematic area to determine whether approaches and interventions are relevant. Strategic and thematic evaluations are undertaken by UNCDF and UNV.

Programme and project evaluations can focus on evaluating performance mid-way through and at the end of the programme cycle. They assess the specific contributions, efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of interventions, as well as strategic positioning and partnerships. Programme and project evaluations are undertaken by UNCDF and UNV.

Joint evaluations

Joint evaluations are one modality of carrying out an evaluation to which different partners contribute. Any evaluation can be conducted as a joint evaluation; there are various degrees of "jointness", depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting. There is often a steering group that oversees the process and a smaller management group to ensure that implementation goes smoothly. Increasingly, joint evaluations are pursued as a preferred option in UNDP while maintaining accountability for its own contribution to results. At the country level, UNDAF evaluations are carried out jointly by United Nations agencies.

Annex II

Evaluation plan template

UNDAF/ CPD outcome	Strategic Plan results area	Evaluation title	Partners (joint evaluation)	Evaluation commissioned by (if other than UNDP)	Type of evaluation*	Planned evaluation completion date	Estimated cost	Provisional source of funding

* In accordance with annex I.

Annex III

Management response template

Key recommendations and management response

Evaluation recommendation 1.				
Management response:				
			Tracking*	
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**	**Comments**	**Status**
1.1				
1.2				
1.3				

Evaluation recommendation 2.				
Management response:				
			Tracking	
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**	**Comments**	**Status**
2.1				
2.2				
2.3				

Evaluation recommendation 3.				
Management response:				
			Tracking	
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**	**Comments**	**Status**
3.1				
3.2				
3.3				

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database.

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Evaluation of UNDP contribution to disaster prevention and recovery

Executive Summary

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I. Introduction

1. The evaluation of UNDP's contribution to disaster prevention and recovery was part of the Evaluation Office work programme for 2009-2010.

2. The evaluation takes as its starting point important natural disaster trends and consequences: The number of disasters has been on the rise this past decade, and their increasing frequency and scale pose mounting economic and humanitarian challenges. Natural disasters have a disproportionate impact on the poor in developing countries, and the associated risks are strongly associated with poverty. In countries with medium to low levels of income and weaker governance, disasters can compound poverty and inequality and reverse development gains. Losses from disasters triggered by natural hazards are threatening achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries.

3. Besides short-term effects such as direct economic loss, disasters hinder long-term human development and human security. There is considerable evidence that impact of disasters on national economies adversely affects social investments, particularly in health and education, and investments that provide employment and income. Disaster risk reduction and sustainable human development therefore are mutually supportive goals.

4. Disaster risk reduction is particularly important for highly vulnerable populations, such as those living in disaster-prone regions, small island developing states and societies weakened by armed conflict. The enormous consequences of disasters for human development and economic growth necessitate effective management of disaster risk as an integral part of development planning. Similarly, a more integrated approach during disaster recovery and reconstruction can help to reduce future risks.

5. This evaluation examines the contribution of UNDP to strengthening national capacities in disaster risk management and recovery since 2000. The evaluation assesses the relevance of UNDP's work with respect to national priorities and the UNDP mandate; the effectiveness of development results; the efficiency of institutional and programming arrangements; and the sustainability of resulting benefits. It provides insights for UNDP in its emerging work of reducing vulnerability to natural disasters as part of support to environment management and adaptation to climate change. The evaluation analyses UNDP policies, strategies and programmes at global, regional and country levels; implementation of related projects; and cooperation in disaster prevention and recovery with other United Nations agencies, international organizations and donors. The evaluation provides a retrospective and prospective assessment of the potential contribution of UNDP.

6. The evaluation builds on the objectives outlined in the first and second multi-year funding frameworks (2000-2003 and 2004-2007), the current strategic plan (2008-2013) and the UNDP strategic vision on assistance to crisis-affected countries. The programme frameworks emphasized three key areas of support in disaster risk management: a) strengthening national capacities in disaster prevention and risk reduction and reducing vulnerability to future events; b) support to response and recovery; and c) addressing UNDP programming principles in gender equality and South-South cooperation. In 2008 UNDP developed the 'Eight Point Agenda' for women's empowerment and gender equality in crisis prevention and recovery. It

requires that 15 percent of the funds for crisis-related activities are allocated for interventions that promote gender equality.

7. The evaluation includes case studies in nine countries (Colombia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mexico, Mozambique and Myanmar) conducted by national and international consultants. These case studies were supplemented by a meta-analysis of the Assessments of Development Results and evaluations commissioned by UNDP country offices; telephone interviews in 15 other countries; and extensive interviews at UNDP headquarters and regional service centres and with key partner organizations.

8. The evaluation considers as part of the strategic framework relevant international conventions and multilateral agreements developed over the past decade. These include formation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005) and the Bali Action Plan (2007). The Millennium Development Goals have further emphasized disaster reduction and mitigation as a development issue. The Bali Action Plan negotiations have highlighted vulnerability and disaster risk reduction as key elements of climate change adaptation.

9. The evaluation covers UNDP technical support in disaster prevention and recovery as well as its management roles, such as assisting United Nations resident coordinators and responding to government requests for international support coordination in the early recovery period after natural disasters.

II. Findings

10. **UNDP has helped countries formulate policies for disaster management, but challenges remain in integrating disaster risk reduction into development planning.**

11. UNDP combines multisector programming in key development areas, extensive country- level presence and the ability to mobilize technical expertise. UNDP has supported policy formulation and helped to establish an enabling environment for building disaster management institutions in over 30 countries. Partly as a consequence, governments have increasingly participated in international and regional debates and cooperation has grown on disaster risk management and climate change over the past decade. This is especially the case among countries with high disaster and climate risk.

12. Several of the case studies demonstrate that more efforts are needed to harmonize roles, responsibilities and accountability in the institutions responsible for disaster risk management. Most countries have also struggled with the challenge of empowering local governments to play a greater role in disaster risk management.

13. Disaster risk reduction requires long-term planning and more sustained efforts at the national level. It has been particularly challenging for UNDP to support countries to integrate disaster risk reduction into development planning.

14. **In some countries disaster risk reduction is being more closely integrated with other UNDP priorities such as poverty reduction, governance and adaptation to climate change. In many others this integration has not been given sufficient priority.**

15. In Mexico, integration of the disaster risk reduction in local development programmes significantly contributed to sustaining development investments at the local level. Attempts to strengthen disaster risk management capacities at the local level are also evident in Bangladesh. Disaster risk reduction is addressed as a governance issue in Honduras. But many country programmes have not made explicit links between disaster prevention and other development programming.

16. In the past three years, there has been an increase in initiatives to address climate change as a development issue, largely through the environment portfolio of UNDP. Although many disaster risk reduction objectives correlate with climate change objectives, the evaluation indicates limited integrated programming in this area. A notable exception is the Maldives, where the nexus of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation has been well established. A recent series of agreements among UNDP policy and practice bureaus to explore and define the nature of cooperation on climate change adaptation may provide opportunities for closer integration in the future.

17. **Community preparedness initiatives can strengthen local capacities, yet they are typically constrained by poor institutionalization of programme processes and outcomes.**

18. Disaster preparedness and risk reduction initiatives at the local level comprise about 54 percent of UNDP's disaster risk reduction interventions and have been implemented in 27 countries. Some programmes have produced important achievements. In India and Mexico, for example, the programmes successfully demonstrated the importance of local preparedness and its benefits. In most cases, however, community programmes have not influenced government programmes and policies. UNDP has had difficulty establishing cooperation among local, state and national governments.

19. **UNDP has spurred participation of women in community initiatives in disaster recovery and prevention, yet the application of gender policies has been uneven. More work is needed to achieve leadership and funding targets.**

20. UNDP has taken significant policy measures to further gender equality in crisis-related programming, and specific attention has been paid to the needs of women. But gender policies have not been systematically implemented. The Eight Point Agenda and the mandatory allocation of 15 percent of the budget for crisis-related programming is an important and unique step taken by UNDP to address issues related to gender and women. While there are indications that these measures are gaining acceptability, only modest efforts have so far been made to integrate gender issues in design and implementation of disaster prevention and recovery programmes.

21. UNDP has ensured participation of women, particularly those from indigenous and vulnerable groups, in community projects and programmes. However, success has been limited when it comes to developing a more coherent approach to integrating gender-related concerns into policy and government programming.

22. UNDP programmes often define achievement narrowly, construing the presence of women in community-level interventions as achievement of gender concerns. This fails to take into account the extent to which women have the opportunity to participate in leadership positions and the extent to which their perspectives and aspirations have been considered.

23. **UNDP support to disaster recovery lacks a strategic focus and has not been used effectively to strengthen national ownership and capacity.**

24. UNDP plays multiple roles in post-disaster situations: it supports short term micro-level livelihood activities and shelter construction, aids United Nations coordination and provides longer term support to strengthen administrative systems and improve government capacities. Evidence from the case studies suggests that these various roles are not clear to disaster recovery partners, and in some cases partners doubt that UNDP has the capacity to carry out assigned tasks.

25. Micro-level livelihood activities and shelter construction have in many cases achieved intended outcomes. But the merits of UNDP involvement need to be considered in the context of the many other actors providing this type of support, including NGOs and community-based organizations.

26. It has been challenging for UNDP to address long-term recovery issues such as strengthening administrative procedures and systems and coordination capacities of government. Limited attention has gone to support for coordination, technical issues (such as land planning, coastal regulations, housing policy) and tackling the causes of vulnerability among specific high-risk groups.

27. **UNDP has made progress in supporting early recovery cluster coordination. However issues remain with respect to communicating the need for the cluster approach, facilitating wider coordination and enhancing national ownership.**

28. UNDP has placed considerable emphasis on support to early recovery cluster coordination. While UNDP has the advantage of bringing a development perspective into the early recovery process, there were shortcomings in its efforts to leverage its partnership with governments at different levels and to enhance national ownership in early recovery cluster coordination.

29. In some situations national governments have been reluctant to operationalize the cluster approach. It may not be acceptable to all governments or other humanitarian stakeholders (as seen in Latin America and elsewhere), which calls for a more nuanced use of it.

30. There are indications that national and local NGOs have not been well integrated into early recovery cluster coordination. The evaluation also found limitations in collaboration with development stakeholders vis-à-vis humanitarian stakeholders. Better communication between UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has proved critical to early recovery cluster coordination.

31. **Complex programme management and administrative procedures constrain effective programming.**

32. Complex and inflexible procedures hinder programme performance and effectiveness. Programme management gets constrained by overambitious outcomes, programmes with short timeframes, unviable deadlines for accomplishing complex tasks, weak synergies between different areas of the programme and poor reporting and monitoring.

33. While quality, transparency and accountability in procurement and project approvals should never be compromised, more efforts are needed to simplify

UNDP's administrative procedures for implementation during crises. The recently introduced fast track policy is a step in this direction. Though it is early in the pilot phase, some managers in country offices have expressed concern that the measures in the fast track have not gone far enough to facilitate speedy implementation in crisis situations.

III. Conclusions

Conclusion 1: While UNDP strategic priorities acknowledge the linkages between poverty reduction, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction, these strategies are not systematically implemented.

34. The strategic plan identifies disaster risk reduction as an important factor in reducing poverty and vulnerability and achieving the Millennium Development Goals and points out that disasters disproportionally affect the poorest. Similarly, it makes explicit linkages between disaster risk reduction and sustainable environment and adaptation. Despite this emphasis, implementation has been constrained by the absence of operational frameworks for integrating cross-cutting issues into UNDP programme areas, both in planning and implementation.

35. The severity of recent disasters has pushed the issue of climate change adaptation into the forefront, with direct implications for UNDP programming. With its support to national governments both before and after disasters, coupled with extensive country support mechanisms in place covering the environmental protection aspects of climate change, UNDP is in a pivotal position to help countries develop effective adaptation strategies.

36. Slow-onset disasters such as drought are treated as part of poverty reduction and sustainable environment support and are not in the purview of disaster risk management. The impact of climate change is likely to blur the boundaries between slow-onset and rapid-onset disasters, and measures to improve coordination among programme areas are critical.

Conclusion 2: National ownership of disaster risk reduction strategies is key to achieving UNDP objectives in poverty reduction and sustainable development.

37. UNDP can play a stronger role in national and international partnerships because of its extensive country-level presence, well-established relationships with governments, neutrality and strong programme support in key areas of development. However, these advantages have not been used effectively to play a leadership role in issues related to recovery, and disaster risk reduction. UNDP has not always been successful in building on its strengths at the national level, particularly on its development-related support.

38. While UNDP has strong partnerships with local government and in communities, it has not leveraged such partnerships to inform national processes and strategies. More reactive engagements and a lack of clearly thought-out strategies for seeking partnerships have limited UNDP contribution.

39. While UNDP has made progress in supporting early recovery cluster coordination, its role at the national level has been limited due to challenges in communicating the need for such an approach and facilitating wider coordination and national ownership. Establishing linkages between humanitarian interventions

and development processes has often been constrained by a narrowly perceived role of cluster lead and inter-agency dynamics. Early recovery, both as a cluster and as a concept, requires more deliberation with stakeholders at the country level and with other United Nations agencies. It is evident that the availability of human and financial resources and technical support has influenced the success of early recovery cluster coordination.

40. **Conclusion 3: UNDP has achieved a measure of success in many micro-level, short-term recovery activities, but at the cost of its longer term focus on risk reduction and development.**

41. Disaster response and recovery very often involves enormous public resources and requires transparent systems. Often UNDP has not given adequate priority to enabling countries to take more effective, sustainable recovery actions. This gap exists in most disaster response efforts, as governments and donors get focused on short-term solutions addressing immediate needs of affected populations, such as livelihood, housing and public infrastructure. UNDP has the flexibility to design longer term recovery programmes to suit country-specific needs and priorities within the disaster context.

IV. Recommendations

***Recommendation 1:* UNDP should clarify that its principal area of focus in disaster prevention and recovery efforts is to assist countries on development dimensions, especially risk reduction and vulnerability.**

42. Addressing social and economic vulnerability requires a more comprehensive programming approach, including joint efforts with poverty reduction, sustainable development and governance programmes. UNDP should provide an operational framework for addressing disaster risk reduction as a cross-cutting issue in development programming.

43. Support to prevent or mitigate slow-onset disasters entails a different approach and alternative strategies. It will require closer coordination with poverty reduction and environment programmes and new partnerships with different government agencies and other stakeholders.

***Recommendation 2:* A stronger commitment is needed to implement UNDP's corporate gender policies and further gender equality in crisis programming.**

44. UNDP should continue the mandatory allocation of funds and improve capacities for systematic application of gender policies in programme planning and implementation. The regional bureaux should play a more active role in implementing the Eight Point Agenda and allocating funds.

45. UNDP should enhance its contribution to policy discussions and debates on gender and public resource allocations at the national level. More systematic support is required for gender-sensitive risk and vulnerability assessments and inclusion of the gender dimension in the national poverty reduction and disaster risk reduction policies.

Recommendation 3: The UNDP disaster risk reduction strategy should be revised to more directly address adaptation to climate change.

46. UNDP should have a unified strategy at country level to support government efforts in integrating climate and disaster risk reduction. UNDP should leverage its strength in both areas to increase access to available funds.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should minimize micro-level, short-term recovery activities that do not contribute to strengthening national capacities, policies or practice. UNDP support should be oriented towards strengthening national capacities for disaster risk reduction and sustainable long-term recovery.

47. During the early recovery phase UNDP should facilitate coordination of activities and support longer term capacity building. This should emphasize strengthening of governance mechanisms to integrate risk reduction in development planning. During early recovery cluster coordination, efforts should go beyond short-term interventions to better engage development stakeholders and enhance national ownership.

Recommendation 5: UNDP should improve administrative procedures that constrain effective programming in natural disasters.

48. Administrative and programming procedures should not only ensure accountability but also facilitate country offices to respond faster with well-planned interventions. UNDP should continue to refine its administrative procedures to enable faster procurement, staff recruitment and flexibility in funding during crises.